

Othello: Key Quotes Explained

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“But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve For daws to peck at: I am not what I am”

The quote is taken from Act 1, Scene 1 of William Shakespeare's play "Othello." In this passage, Iago, one of the main characters, is speaking to Roderigo about his intentions and his true nature. Let's break down the quote and its meaning in the context of the play:

"I will wear my heart upon my sleeve": This line suggests that Iago is going to be open and honest about his emotions and intentions. He is not going to hide his true feelings or thoughts. However, the phrase "wear my heart upon my sleeve" also implies vulnerability because it means exposing one's innermost feelings and emotions to others.



"For daws to peck at": Iago acknowledges that by being so open and transparent about his intentions, he is making himself vulnerable to criticism and manipulation by others. "Daws" here refers to crows or birds that might peck at something exposed and vulnerable. In this context, "daws" symbolize people who might take advantage of his openness and use it against him.

"I am not what I am": This line is paradoxical and central to understanding Iago's character. On one level, it suggests that Iago is not as he appears to be on the surface. He may be pretending to be trustworthy and loyal while hiding his true, malicious intentions. This paradoxical statement also reflects Iago's deceptive nature throughout the play. He presents himself as honest and loyal to Othello while secretly plotting Othello's downfall.

Overall, this quote highlights Iago's duplicity and manipulative nature. He is willing to expose his true intentions but uses this openness to deceive and manipulate those around him, including Othello. It sets the tone for Iago's role as the play's primary antagonist and master manipulator, as he pretends to be what he is not and uses others' trust in him to further his sinister agenda.

“Reputation is an idle and most false imposition, oft got without merit and lost without deserving.”

The quote has been taken from Act 2, Scene 3 of William Shakespeare's play "Othello." In this scene, Iago is advising Cassio, who has just been stripped of his rank by Othello due to a drunken brawl. Let's break down the quote and its meaning in the context of the play:

"Reputation is an idle and most false imposition": Iago is telling Cassio that one's reputation is often based on false or empty pretenses. In other words, how people perceive you and the reputation you have may not necessarily reflect your true character or actions. It can be a misleading and unreliable measure of a person's worth.

"Oft got without merit and lost without deserving": Iago suggests that reputation is often acquired without deserving it, meaning that people can gain a good reputation through luck or by appearing virtuous without actually being virtuous. Similarly, he implies that reputation can be lost or tarnished even when a person doesn't deserve it, perhaps due to rumors, misunderstandings, or false accusations.

In the context of the play "Othello," this quote is significant because it foreshadows the central theme of reputation and its destructive power. Iago is a master manipulator who uses the characters' reputations against them to further his malicious schemes. He deliberately tarnishes Cassio's reputation by getting him involved in the drunken brawl, which ultimately leads to Cassio's demotion. Iago also targets Othello's trust in Desdemona's reputation and uses it to convince Othello of her infidelity, leading to tragic consequences.

This quote underscores the idea that in the world of "Othello," reputation is fragile and easily manipulated. It's a theme that drives the characters' actions and the unfolding tragedy as Iago exploits their trust in each other's reputations for his own nefarious purposes.



“I kissed thee ere I killed thee, no way but this, killing myself, to die upon a kiss.”

This quotation has been taken from Act 5, Scene 2 of William Shakespeare's play "Othello." In this scene, Othello has just killed his wife, Desdemona, and he is reflecting on his actions before taking his own life.

In his last words, Othello speaks to his murdered wife. Othello is speaking poetically about his relationship with Desdemona. His love, and eventual jealousy, killed Desdemona. If he had never loved or kissed her, she never would have died. Let's break down the quote and its meaning in the context of the play:

"I kissed thee ere I killed thee":

Othello is referring to the moment just before he killed Desdemona. He kissed her, which signifies both tenderness and love but also the act of betrayal. This kiss represents the complex mixture of emotions and conflicting feelings within Othello at that moment. He still loves Desdemona, but he believes he must kill her due to his misguided belief that she has been unfaithful.



"no way but this": Othello is expressing a sense of inevitability. He believes that there was no other option or way out of the situation he found himself in. In his mind, he had to kill Desdemona as a form of retribution for what he believed was her unfaithfulness.

"Killing myself, to die upon a kiss": This line encapsulates the tragic irony of the situation. Othello is acknowledging that in killing Desdemona, he is essentially destroying himself as well. The act of killing her, in his mind, is a form of self-destruction. The reference to "to die upon a kiss" suggests that this final kiss with Desdemona is symbolic of their love and connection, even in death. It's a poignant and tragic moment that highlights the depth of Othello's despair and inner turmoil.

This quote is significant because it reveals Othello's profound sense of regret and the tragic consequences of his jealousy and insecurity. It reflects the central themes of love, betrayal, and the destructive power of jealousy that run throughout the play. Othello's realization of the irreparable harm he has caused is a moment of profound tragedy, as he understands the depth of his own mistake and the loss of the love he held so dear.

**"She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them."**



These lines have been quoted from Act 1, Scene 3 of William Shakespeare's play "Othello." In this scene, Othello is explaining to the Venetian senators and Desdemona's father, Brabantio, how he and Desdemona fell in love. These lines reveal the nature of their love and the reasons behind their affection for each other.

"She loved me for the dangers I had passed": Othello is saying that

Desdemona fell in love with him because of the stories and experiences he shared about his life and the dangers he had faced. Othello's background as a Moor and his experiences as a soldier in various battles made him an intriguing and adventurous figure in Desdemona's eyes. She was attracted to him because of his history of facing perilous situations, and this added to his allure.

"And I loved her that she did pity them": Othello, on the other hand, loved Desdemona because she showed empathy and compassion for the hardships he had endured. Her pity for his past difficulties touched his heart, and he saw in her a kind and caring soul. This created a deep emotional connection between them.

These lines highlight the mutual attraction and emotional bond between Othello and Desdemona. Their love is based on a shared understanding and appreciation for each other's past experiences and the emotions that these experiences elicited. It emphasizes the idea that love can be born from a combination of admiration, empathy, and shared experiences, which, in the case of Othello and Desdemona, formed a strong and genuine connection between them. Unfortunately, as the play progresses, their love faces significant challenges and ultimately tragedy, driven by the manipulation and jealousy of other characters.